

VZCZCXRO3623  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL  
DE RUEHBUL #0504/01 0401057  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 091057Z FEB 10 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5501  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 4539  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000504

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2020

TAGS: PGOV AF PREL

SUBJECT: KARZAI COS: NO NATIONALIZATION OF ELECTIONS,  
RECONCILIATION STRUCTURE NEEDED

KABUL 00000504 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: President Karzai's Chief of Staff Daudzai claimed there is no presidential decree in the works to nationalize the Electoral Complaints Committee (ECC) and that the law remains as it stands to allow for international observers to remain on the ECC. However, we have learned that nationalization is in fact under discussion. In a one-on-one meeting with Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone on February 7, Daudzai expressed support for the timeline of upcoming bilateral events that Ricciardone outlined and particularly welcomed the proposed SVTC with President Obama and the Karzai trip to Washington this March. Daudzai also shared some of the logistical challenges that are standing in the way of reconciliation efforts, in particular the lack of a structure to oversee the reconciliation program. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Explaining that UN SRSG Kai Eide has a list of candidates whom he would like to nominate for the international slots on the ECC, Ricciardone said that the international community would like reassurance from Karzai that the current structure of the ECC will not be changed so that they can move forward on these nominations. Daudzai responded that GIRoA was "far away" from changing the law and that no presidential decree to change it was being drafted. While he conceded that nationalizing the ECC was something GIRoA is considering, he said there was no plan to do so in the short term. In the absence of a decree, the electoral law would stay as it is and therefore the ECC structure would not change. However, in direct contradiction to this assertion, on February 8, we learned that the Electoral Law and a decree amending it were discussed in the Cabinet, with a follow up discussion to be held on February 11. The decree may be fast-tracked so that it is issued before Parliament returns February 20.

¶3. Daudzai advised that Eide should go ahead and make his recommendations to Karzai for candidates for the ECC. If it were to happen, Ricciardone cautioned, nationalization of the ECC would become the focus of Karzai's trip to Washington and would negatively impact the bilateral relationship. Ricciardone further expressed the US hope that Karzai will replace Ludin with a strong, credible figure prior to his trip to the US. Karzai will work in consultation with Parliament on finding a replacement for Ludin and other IEC issues, Daudzai reported. Identifying a replacement will have to wait until parliament is back in session on February 20.

-----  
Reconciliation -- Structure Needed  
-----

¶4. (C) Addressing another top GIRoA priority, Daudzai stressed the importance of creating the mechanisms needed to

support their reconciliation effort. Normally the National Security Advisor (NSA) would be charged with such a project, and the lack of an NSA has impeded progress, Daudzai said. If former Foreign Minister Rangeen Spanta is named to the post, he is unlikely to spearhead this issue, Daudzai said, because it is not his area of expertise. Both Daudzai and Ricciardone discussed the recent denunciation of the Taliban by the Shinwari tribe as a learning experience for the US and for GIRoA on how to best handle reconciliation on a local level. While speculating that Nangahar governor Gul Agha Sherzai was involved in the reconciliation of the Shinwari, Daudzai expressed frustration that there was insufficient coordination between GIRoA and the Shinwari. GIRoA must have a policy on paper, Daudzai asserted, to guide its actions in cases like this. In the absence of a clear road map, key decision makers will be acting on their own counsel.

Similarly, Ricciardone expressed the lack of clarity among US forces on how to respond when approached by local leaders who would like to reconcile, especially if they express lack of confidence in GIRoA. As Karzai develops his organization for reconciliation efforts, human and women's rights must be accounted for, Ricciardone said.

¶ 15. (C) Daudzai cited the complexity of the modern Taliban as a factor that confuses GIRoA's approach to reconciliation. Norway recently launched an initiative to start talks with the Quetta Shura, he said, but GIRoA doubts whether the people whom Norway met with were legitimate Taliban. He said that he is not aware of any attempt to reach out to the Haqqani network right now, but said that GIRoA has a program to reach out to Hekmatyar. As Hekmatyar ages, Daudzai speculated, he is becoming more willing to leave behind a peaceful legacy. If Hekmatyar reconciles, all of his people will follow behind him, Daudzai said.

KABUL 00000504 002.2 OF 002

¶ 16. (C) As GIRoA moves forward on reconciliation, it is mindful of the impact such efforts may have on regional relations, Daudzai said. All of Afghanistan's neighbors have different agendas when it comes to reconciliation, and Daudzai did not see a consensus emerging amongst Afghanistan's neighbors on reconciliation. Reconciliation makes Iran and Pakistan very nervous, he said. Iran wants the Taliban out, he said, but they don't want a US victory, while the Russians want the Taliban to be defeated, but not for the US to withdraw from Afghanistan as a result. When confronting these conflicting concerns, Daudzai said, it is all the more essential that GIRoA develop a clear plan on reconciliation.

Eikenberry